

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 16, line 24, with the following amended paragraph:

A method of producing a tapered optical fibre is further provided, the method comprising the steps of:

- a. heating a section of ~~the an~~ optical fibre of claim 35 as described above;
- b. stretching the optical fibre ~~of claim 35~~ during heating; thereby providing first and second fibre cross sections being separated by a tapered length of the optical fibre over which the cross-sectional physical dimensions of the fibre are tapered down from the first to the second cross section; and
- c. optionally cleaving the optical fibre after stretching at one or more positions.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 17, line 19, with the following amended paragraph:

In a particular embodiment, the stretching is performed using a fibre tapering rig after production of ~~the an~~ optical fibre of claim 26 as described above.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 17, line 25, with the following amended paragraph:

In a particular embodiment, the stretching is performed during production of a fused, tapered fibre bundle comprising ~~the an~~ optical fibre of claim 26 as described above.